TROUBLESHOOTING - SPIRITS

Q. Why is there steam coming out from the distillate collection tube?

A. Insufficient cooling water. Increase the flow rate.

Q. Why is my spirit coming out of the still cloudy?

A. Several reasons:

a. The wash was not fully fermented

b. The still is dirty or faulty

c. The fermentation temperature was too high

d. The wash did not have enough time to settle and clear

Q. What can I do about it?

A. The carbon filter process will remove most of the cloudiness but you could distil it again with some fresh water or with your next wash. You can also add some distilling conditioner to your wash in the pot before starting.

Q. Why is the yield from the still so low?

A. Your wash has not completely fermented (Always use a hydrometer to check before distilling) or there is a steam leak in the still.

Q. Why does my still thermometer gives odd readings?

A. It is probably not fitted in the bung correctly. Make sure the red bulb at the base of the thermometer is protruding about 2cm away from the bung.

Q. What if my tap water is above 20°C?

A. Increase the flow slightly.

Q. Why do I need to ferment within a certain range of temperatures?

A. Most spirit yeasts ferment between 18-26°C. If the temperature is too high this will result in very rapid fermentation which will kill the yeast and produce unwanted by-products. If the temperature is too low, fermentation will be much slower and may stop completely.

Q. How do I control the temperature during fermentation?

A. During cold conditions use an immersion heater, heating pad or heating belt. During hot weather, fill the lid of the fermenter with water, then wrap towelling around the fermenter, ensuring you gather the top of the skirt into the water in the lid.

Q. I think fermentation has stopped?

A. Using your hydrometer take a reading. If it's 990 proceed as normal. If it's higher and all signs of fermentation has stopped, try restarting by getting the temperature into the specified range, then give it a big stir for about 2 minutes.

If it fails to restart and your reading is 1005 or less, then distil as normal but use some Distilling Conditioner in the pot. If the reading is above 1005, add some Bayanus yeast or distil it anyway and accept a lower yield.

Q. The alcohol strength from the still is below 75%?

A. Insufficient refluxing. Add more ceramic saddles to the tower.

Q. Our water supply is fed from a tank and I can't adust the water flow to the still correctly?

A. Fit an Essencia condenser pump and this will minimise water flow fluctuations.